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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 MEXICO 006604

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: CALDERON NAMES SOCIAL CABINET

REF: MEXICO 6571

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: President-elect Calderon announced his six social cabinet selections November 24, saying their overall mission would be to "equalize opportunities" for all Mexicans. The appointments include: Josefina Vazquez Mota as Secretary of Education; Beatriz Zavala Peniche as Secretary

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of Social Development; Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada as Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources; Jose Angel

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Cordoba Villalobos as Secretary of Health; Alberto Cardenas Jimenez as Secretary of Agriculture; and Abelardo Escobar Prieto to continue as Secretary of Agrarian Reform. Biographies of each Secretary-designate are below.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Transition team member Juan Molinar Horcasitas said that security-related cabinet positions, including the secretaries of defense, navy, and public security, as well as

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the attorney general, would be announced Monday, November 27. Calderon announced his economic cabinet selections on November 20 (reftel). End summary.

Josefina Vazquez Mota: Secretary of Public Education (SEP)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Josefina Vazquez Mota is the first woman ever appointed to head the Secretariat of Public Education. Considered among Calderon's most trusted and influential advisors, she served as his campaign coordinator before going on to head transition team negotiations with the PRI, PRD, and other parties to garner support for the President-elect's

proposed coalition government.

¶4. (SBU) Born January 20, 1961 in Mexico City and a former resident of the northern state of Chihuahua, Ms. Mota is an economist by training. In 2000, she was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, where during her brief tenure she distinguished herself as the party's effective deputy economic coordinator. She served as Secretary of Social Development in President Fox's cabinet from December 2000 to January 2006. Although a surprise last minute choice for Fox's cabinet, over time she gained stature and strengthened her position in the administration and in the PAN.

¶5. (SBU) Ms. Mota earned her bachelor's degree in economics at Iberoamerican University, and has also studied at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM) and at the Pan-American Institute of Upper-Level Business Management. She has written widely for the Mexican press and spoken at numerous conferences in Mexico and abroad. She describes herself as having battled gender discrimination in the workplace and throughout her career has displayed a particular concern for issues affecting Mexican women. She is married and has three daughters.

Beatriz Zavala Peniche: Secretary of Social Development
(Sedesol)

¶6. (SBU) Elected a federal Senator from the Yucatan for the 2006-2012 term, Secretary of Social Development nominee Beatriz Zavala Peniche served as a federal Deputy from 1997-2000 and again from 2003-2006. She will need to give up her Senate seat in order to serve in the new Cabinet. Ms. Zavala was presidential advisor to the National Council for Culture and Arts (CONACULTA) from 2001-2002, and also served as a member of her state congress. In the LIX legislature she was President of the Committee on Social Development in the Chamber of Deputies. Ms. Zavala was born on October 23, 1957.

MEXICO 00006604 002 OF 004

¶7. (SBU) In accepting her appointment, Ms. Zavala said the fight against poverty is the responsibility of all Mexicans and that they must work together to combat the nation's greatest enemies: inequality and extreme poverty. She emphasized that Mexico cannot complete its path to democracy without social justice. She singled out the need to help the most vulnerable groups, including the indigenous population, women, and others who face discrimination.

Juan Rafael Elvira Quesada: Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)

¶8. (SBU) Mr. Elvira brings a strong environmental and political background to his job, but comes from a low-visibility position. A graduate of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM, Cuautitlan Campus) in Agricultural Engineering, Juan Elvira completed his master's degree in Agricultural Engineering at Cranfield Institute of Technology in Bedfordshire, England. He was president of the board of the National Park Barranca del Cupapitzio, State of Michoacan, from 1997 to 1998 and president of the Municipality of Uruapan, Michoacan, from 1999 to 2001. During the last five years, Elvira held various positions at the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT): he was Delegate in Michoacan of the Environmental Attorney's Office (PROFEPA) from 2001 to 2003; he was Director General of the Primary Sector and Renewable Natural Resources in SEMARNAT from 2003 to 2004; Undersecretary for Promotion and Environmental Regulation from 2004 to 2005; and Deputy Attorney for Industrial Inspection at PROFEPA from 2005-2006.

¶9. (SBU) Elvira's appointment as Secretary of SEMARNAT is

surprising, since his name was not in the list of likely candidates to head the Secretariat. A low profile official at SEMARNAT, his appointment is positive because of his professional background and work experience in different areas of the organization. He is also the second PROFEPA official in a row to be elevated to the Secretary's job. Elvira worked in President-elect Calderon's home state of Michoacan. While announcing his appointment, Felipe Calderon pointed out that Elvira's main challenges are environmental conservation under the framework of sustainable development and closing the gap between biological richness and the poverty of indigenous communities. Elvira himself said his priorities would be forests and sustainable development, water (access for all to clean water and proper management of the resource), and waste management. Mr. Elvira was born on April 11, 1958, in Mexico City.

Jose Angel Cordova Villalobos: Secretary of Health

¶10. (SBU) President-elect Calderon's selection of Jose Angel Cordova Villalobos as Secretary of Health is a sign of continuity in the Health Secretariat. A PAN member, Cordova was considered a likely candidate for this position. In announcing his appointment, Calderon instructed Cordova to increase health coverage to guarantee access to health services to all Mexicans through the Seguro Popular program.

¶11. (SBU) As Chairman of the Health Commission in the Mexican 59th Congress, Cordova supported Secretary of Health Julio Frenk in modifying the General Health Law to include the Seguro Popular, a mechanism that provides access to health services to Mexicans not covered by public health services. Cordova also supported the creation of the Genomic Medicine

MEXICO 00006604 003 OF 004

Institute a year ago, the twelfth research institute of the Secretariat of Health. In 2004, Cordova organized a special

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session for the US-Mexico Border Health Commission in order to discuss its role and budgetary situation.

¶12. (SBU) Cordova was born on August 19, 1953. He graduated as a physician from the University of Guanajuato in 1975 and completed his master's degree in Public Administration there in 2000. Cordova was professor in the School of Medicine of the University of Guanajuato and Director of the same school from 1990 to 1997. He served as editor of the Mexican Magazine of Medical Education from 1993 to 1997. Cordova was President of the Commission for Surgical Education of the Mexican Association of General Surgery from 1995 to 1996 and Vice-President of the Mexican Association of Medical Schools and Faculties from 1993 to 1994. He served as President of the General Council of the Electoral Institute of the State of Guanajuato from 1997 to 2002. He was also Chief of the Medical Education Division at Los Angeles Hospital in Leon, Guanajuato, from 2002 to 2003. Cordova chaired the Health Commission of the Chamber of Deputies from 2004 to 2006 as a federal Deputy from the National Action Party representing the State of Guanajuato. In June 2005, the University Paul Sabatier of Toulouse, France, awarded him a Doctorate Honoris Causa for his activities in the field of medicine.

Alberto Cardenas Jimenez: Secretary of Agriculture (Segarpa)

¶13. (SBU) Prior to his nomination as Secretary of Agriculture, Alberto Cardenas Jimenez served as the President of the Senate's Agricultural Commission, having been elected to the Senate in July 2006. In September 2003, President Vicente Fox designated Cardenas as Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), from which he resigned in 2005 to pursue his unsuccessful candidacy for the PAN presidential nomination. Cardenas's government experience is considerable. From April 2002 to the present he was the

General Director of the National Forest Commission, a separate body of the federal government. From 1995 to 2001, Cardenas was Governor of the state of Jalisco. From 1992 to 1994 he was president of the city of Ciudad Guzman in Jalisco.

¶14. (SBU) Mr. Cardenas was born on April 4, 1958 in Zapotlan el Grande, Jalisco. His political trajectory occurred inside the National Action Party (PAN) while serving as a member of the PAN's National Executive Committee and as a member of Ciudad Guzman's Board of Directors. He holds a master's in Industrial Engineering from the Technological Institute of Ciudad Guzman and a master's and doctorate in Business Planning and Industrial Engineering, respectively, from the Polytechnic University in Madrid, Spain. Cardenas's academic experience also includes a position as Coordinator and Division Head of Advanced Studies and the Technological Institute in Ciudad Guzman. He has given masters levels classes there and at the University of Coliman in economics and finance. Cardenas is married to Mrs. Joann Novoa Mossberger and has three sons.

Abelardo Escobar Prieto: Secretary of Agrarian Reform

¶15. (SBU) Abelardo Escobar Prieto was asked by President-elect Calderon to continue as Secretary of Agrarian Reform. Prior to being named Secretary of Agrarian Reform by President Fox in April of 2006, he served as the Director of the National Agrarian Registration.

MEXICO 00006604 004 OF 004

¶16. (SBU) Escobar Prieto is an agronomist from the Escuela Superior de Agricultura "Hermonos Escobar" (ESAHE) located in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, where he served as an educator for twenty years. During his long political, professional, and academic career, he has served as General Director of his alma mater, representative of ESAHE in the Constituent Assembly of the Mexican Association of Upper Agricultural Education, and from 2000-2003 as a federal Deputy serving on the Commissions of Budget and Public Accounts, Estate and Public Credit, Rural Development and, for some months, the Special Commission of Stockbreeding.

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